This course will be a Werkstatt, an intense production course in two modules. The focus of the course will be on the development of the participants’ individual or collective artistic practice.

The course takes its departure from the act of drawing, in the widest possible sense: as representation, as invention, as construction and reconstruction, as memory and speculation, as narration and as a performative act (as in drawing a border on a map, drawing a 6-digit check, or drawing fire or criticism or attention).

Building upon a series of short assignments and tasks which will cover a range of traditional approaches to drawing, such as projecting from life, constructing for visual perception, creating narratives, playing with mark-making and rhetorics of expression, participants will formulate an ambitious work plan and individual projects. The course then follows the development of these individual projects closely, through group critiques, individual tutorials and text seminars, prompted by course discussions and/or problems arising from the participants’ projects.

We will not only contemplate - and engage in - different attitudes and approaches to drawing, but we will also discuss how the role of drawing has changed and if and how it might have a new and specific relevance today.

From maps and city plans, from the hole in the ground, which led to Sketchland, the peculiar realm in Charles Dickens’ eponymous narrative, where human beings obey the laws not of biology, but of drawing, so that parts of bodies can be erased without their owners having to die or suffer pain, to the endlessly interconnecting tunnels
of contemporary digital environments, where we massacre each other joyfully and with impunity, we will try to understand the evolving nature of drawing as a means of constructing realities. The broader question, underlying all this, will be how to position oneself in these changing realities, as a contemporary person, as a political agent, a human body, and as an artist, who perhaps still draws.

In the second module of the course each participant will finalize and present an ambitious project. As a group, we will then try to decide, how these works might be meet a public in ways that are relevant, functional and contemporary.

Olav Westphalen is a German-American artist whose work often takes the form of games, experiments, drawings and cartoons. He has produced mass-media comedy and cartoons while at the same time showing in museums and galleries such as The Whitney Museum, ICA London, The Swiss Institute NY, Moderna Museet etc. His work is included in Vitamin D/ New Perspectives in Drawing, Phaidon Press. He is currently a Professor at the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm.

Bernie Madoff’s Slippers on Auction vs. Filippa K Brand Slippers on Father’s Day Sale, both pictured in the same issue of Dagens Nyheter on November 5, 2010. Olav Westphalen, 2011, ink on paper/collage, 97.5 cm x 166 cm